

S-E-C-R-E-T

23 January 1967

LA STAFF NOTE

SUBJECT: Is Argentina Moving Towards a Tougher Dictatorship?

1. In our ill-fated (malogrado) draft estimate on Argentina last October, we opined that discontent within the military establishment would increase, would cause serious difficulties for President Onganía and, eventually, would be likely to bring a new contest for power. [REDACTED]

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2. [REDACTED] General Alsogaray, the new Army Commander-in-Chief, and other military leaders, mostly Army, have been meeting to discuss their general dissatisfaction with President Onganía's implementation of the Revolutionary Program. Onganía's handling of organized labor and the role he has given to certain of his civilian advisers are particularly sore points with these military leaders. Onganía is aware of this discontent, but there is no easy way for him to deal with it. We believe that his position is not as secure as it was last December, when he removed Army

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Commander-in-Chief Pistarini, who was then acting as a spokesman for dissatisfied military figures. Alsogaray is a much tougher type than Pistarini; there is no suitable replacement for Alsogaray conveniently at hand; and Onganía cannot be confident that the military establishment would meekly accept the affront of another removal of the Army Commander-in-Chief.

3. We do not think that the present rack-up of military opposition to Onganía provides the kind of margin that Argentine officers like to have in their favor before trying to unseat a President -- particularly an Onganía, who has followers in many key Army positions. Alsogaray and his cohorts are likely first to try to bring Onganía around to their way of thinking -- that the program of the Revolution must be pushed more rapidly forward, even at the risk of provoking labor violence. If unable to persuade or press Onganía to this course, however, the Alsogaray group probably will try to whittle his support down further and, when the moment appears propitious, probably will make an open bid for power. At any rate, the Onganía regime must soon either take a harder line with labor or with the dissatisfied military. Our guess is that the direction of change, whether or not Onganía continues in office, will be toward a considerably tougher dictatorship.

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